



The End of the Journey

Between June 1838 and March 1839, more than 15,000 Cherokees trekked west from their traditional eastern homeland to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) over the “Trail of Tears.” More than 1,000 died during the journey westward, and there may have been as many as 4,000 that died as a direct result of their forced migration. Once they arrived in their new homeland, Cherokee detachments disbanded at one of eight disbandment sites, the most popular being sites near present-day Jay, Westville, and Stilwell.

In accordance with the 1835 Treaty of New Echota, the new arrivals were promised one year of subsistence provisions, to be distributed at one of several depots in the Cherokee Nation. That year proved exceedingly trying, however. The delivery of provisions proved halting, and most Cherokees spent the year 1839 living in tents and other temporary quarters while awaiting their first year’s harvest.

The number was found to be 489 ... I have issued a sufficient quantity of cotton domestic to the Indians for Tents to protect them from the weather ... as they were for the most part separated from their homes in Georgia, without having the means or time to prepare ...

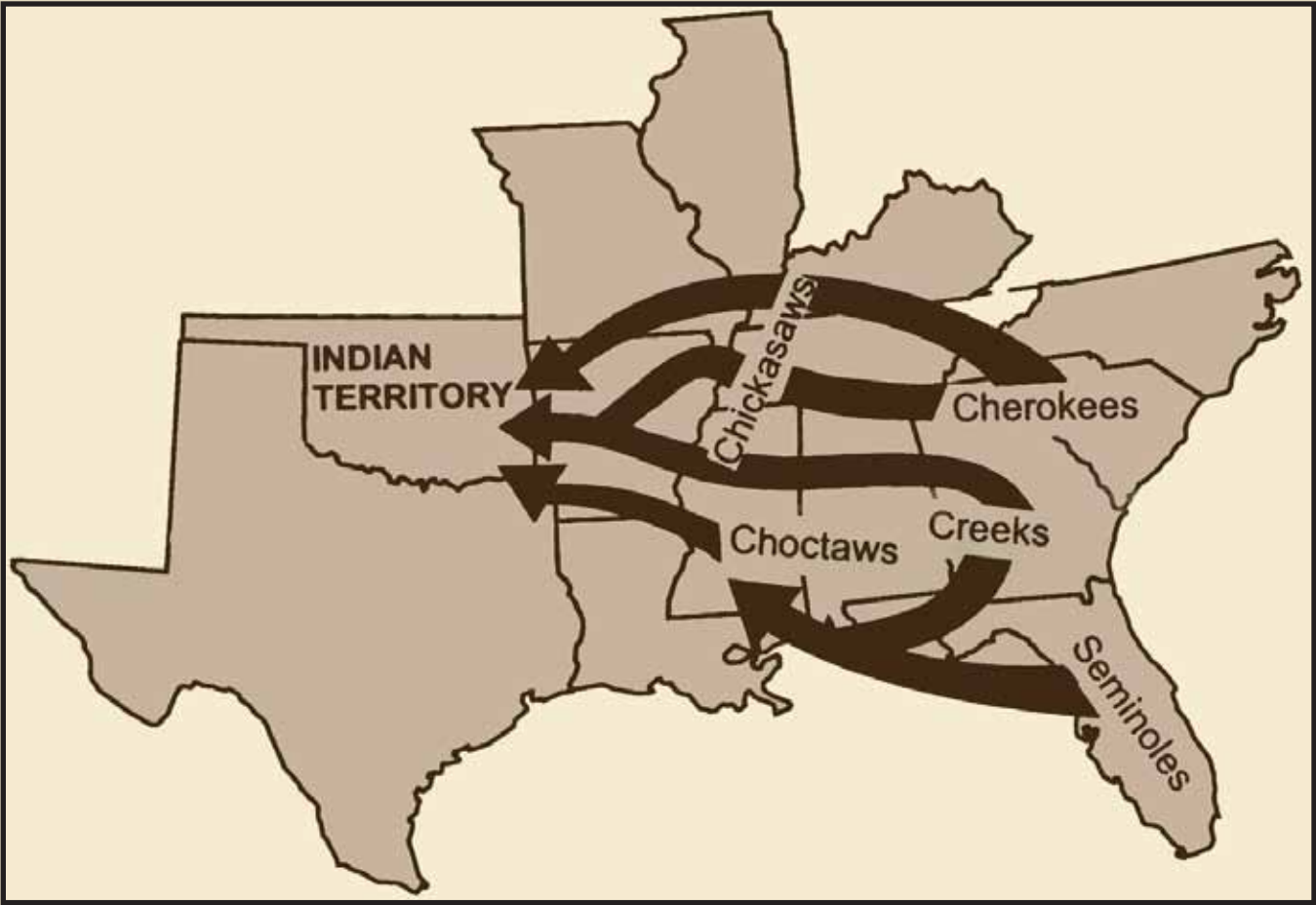
Lt. Edward Deas, June 1838



Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it would have for Indian peoples. One thing was certain; millions of acres of Indian lands were given to American settlers.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte.



After passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the United States government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and, due to a special exemption, formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.



By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments, and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

Home in the West

After early breakfast, we proceeded to Mr. Woodhall's, 8 miles. This is the place of deposit, & also the place where Mr. Taylor is to deliver the detachment over to the U. States officers, who are to supply them with provisions for a year. We arrived about noon...

Reverend Daniel Butrick, March 30, 1839



George Woodall's farm was a busy scene as groups of Cherokee arrived here after their 800-mile trek west from their southern Appalachian homelands. As detachments arrived, they ended their journey at a location chosen for their group. The Cherokee then scattered to select home sites nearby, but for the next year the emigrants would return to this farm for food or supplies, as promised in

the 1835 removal treaty. Woodall's farm was one of five ration-issuing depots established in Indian Territory by the US government. Thousands arrived here in early 1839 including Hair Conrad's detachment of 654 Cherokee in January, followed by 1,311 with Peter Hildebrand and 942 with Richard Taylor in March. Families worked hard to build homes and prepare the land for crops.

Later that year, Reverend Jesse Bushyhead purchased the Woodall farm and it became known as Bushyhead's Depot or Breathtown. In 1841, he sold the property to the Baptist Board which set up the Baptist Mission with a church, school, and printing press. In August 1844, the first issue of the *Cherokee Messenger*—the first paper produced in present-day Oklahoma—rolled off the press.